

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) issued the following statement on the case of Ms. Zahra Kamalfar, an Iranian political refugee who has been granted Canadian refugee status after living for two years in Russian airport:

"I am pleased to announce that Ms. Zahra Kamalfar and her two children, Anna and Davood, have been granted refugee status and have been accepted for resettlement to Canada, where the family will be reunited with Ms. Kamalfar's brother.

"Ms. Kamalfar is an Iranian political dissident who was arrested while attending a political protest in Iran and was jailed, where she was repeatedly beaten and tortured. During a 2005 work furlough, she escaped from Iran and arrived in Moscow's Sheremetyvo Airport, where she and her children resided for almost two years under conditions of extreme hardship and duress, sleeping on airport terminal floors, enduring a cold Russian winter without blankets, and washing in public restrooms.

"I learned of Ms. Kamalfar's case through concerned constituents, who worked closely with my office staff to bring Ms. Kamalfar's case to the attention of the United States Department of State and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Through their and my office's advocacy, Ms. Kamalfar was granted refugee status through UNHCR and, subsequently, resettlement assignment to Canada.

"Although the process has been long and arduous, it is truly heart-warming to see a positive resolution for Ms. Kamalfar's case. I applaud her courageous efforts and her resilience in the face of extreme hardship, which serve as an inspiration to us all. As Zahra Kamalfar begins a new life marked by political and religious freedom, I wish her and her family all the best in their future endeavors."